

# Country Higher Education Profile – Kenya

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## Introduction

Kenya is a country of about 28.7 million people. Although Kenya is a multi-ethnic country, Kiswahili, a language that is spoken widely in the country, is the lingua franca; and English is the medium of instruction in the Kenyan education system, as well as the country's official language.

## History of Higher Education

The first Kenyan higher educational institution was The Royal Technical College of East Africa, opened in Nairobi in 1956. In 1961, the Royal Technical College was renamed the Royal College of Nairobi and turned into a university college. In 1963, when Kenya attained its independence, the Royal College became the University College of Nairobi. In 1970, the University College of Nairobi was renamed the University of Nairobi.

Kenyatta College, a teacher-training institution situated on the outskirts of Nairobi, became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi in 1972 and was elevated into a full -fledged university in 1985. Since then, the government of Kenya has established 5 other public universities.

## Enrollment

Kenya has 6 public and 13 private universities with an enrollment of about 50,000 students. Roughly 80% are enrolled in public universities, while 20% of the total university student population attends private universities.

More than 60,000 students enroll in middle-level colleges. The middle-level colleges cater to a variety of post-secondary career courses leading to certificate, diploma, and higher diploma awards. By 1990, Kenya had about 160 middle-level colleges; by 2000 it is estimated that the country had more than 250 of them.

Undergraduate Student Enrollment at Kenyan Public and Private Universities 1996-97 through 1999-2000 (Academic Year)								
	1996-97		1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>Public Universities</b>								
Nairobi University	10,102	3,558	9,347	3,232	8,976	3,449	8,489	3,440
Kenyatta University	5,520	3,054	4,530	2,613	4,738	3,020	4,189	3,007
JKUAT University	1,818	417	2,556	452	2,471	621	2,512	625
Egerton University	5,445	2,340	5,705	2,331	5,654	2,519	7,132	2,841
Moi University	-	-	3,588	1,363	3,705	1,418	4,136	1,649
Maseno University	1,739	859	1,860	949	2,687	1,312	2,044	1,211
Subtotal	24,624	10,228	27,586	10,940	28,231	12,339	28,502	12,773
<b>Private Accredited</b>								
Daystar University	559	691	565	727	720	961	861	1,417
Baraton University	489	433	470	372	498	454	537	507
Catholic University	569	638	-	-	742	660	807	810
U.S.I.U.	852	901	868	940	902	999	928	1,032

Scott Theological Coll.	65	13	68	14	80	16	84	19
Subtotal	2,534	2,676	1,971	2,053	2,942	3,090	3,217	3,785
<b>Other Private Univs.</b>								
Nazarene University	116	82	230	159	200	119	264	154
NEGST	45	39	67	28	68	40	44	46
EAST	124	15	112	23	106	25	77	20
PAC	90	12	80	13	73	24	85	26
NIST	39	16	53	18	20	9	43	22
KHBC	52	23	37	21	42	27	47	36
St. Paul's T.C.	92	9	92	13	84	15	83	17
Methodist University	-	-	-	-	74	33	103	56
Subtotal	558	196	671	275	667	292	746	377
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,716</b>	<b>13,100</b>	<b>30,228</b>	<b>13,268</b>	<b>31,840</b>	<b>15,721</b>	<b>32,465</b>	<b>16,935</b>

Source: Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Statistics Section, 2000

## Faculty

The support staff-to-student ratio is about double that applicable in other universities. Applying a realistic ratio of 1:6 indicates that the University of Nairobi is overemployed by about 2,517 support staff. If one applies a ratio of 1:18, which is the average in the Commonwealth universities, then the University of Nairobi is carrying an excess baggage of 739 academic members of staff. The strain of gross over-employment at the University of Nairobi applies to all public universities in the country.

The Staff-to-Student Ratio in all the Public Universities (1994-97)						
University	Academic Staff-to-Student ratio			Support Staff-to-Student Ratio		
	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Nairobi	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:3	1:3	1:3
JKUAT*	1:9	1:9	1:9	1:3	1:3	1:3
Moi	1:12	1:6	1:6	1:4	1:3	1:3
Egerton	1:14	1:14	1:14	1:4	1:3	1:3
Kenyatta	1:16	1:14	1:14	1:4	1:5	1:5
Maseno	1:18	1:12	1:12	1:3	1:3	1:3
Average	1:13	1:12	1:12	1:3	1:3	1:3

Source: Commission for Higher Education, 2000.

\*Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

## Administrative Structure

University councils are charged with the responsibility of policy formulation, creation of faculties and departments, and approval of the appointment of university staff. The university senate is responsible to the council for academic affairs, financial, and administrative management of the university. Senates are presided over by vice-chancellors and are dominated by heads of departments who are potential vice-chancellors. Under the senate, faculty boards and departments, oversee instruction and also administer examinations. Except for the faculty deans, staff, and student representatives on university councils, all the other officers are appointed.

## Funding and Resources

Until the early 1970s, university education in Kenya was free and the full cost was borne by the government. During the 1991-92 academic year, the government introduced a cost-sharing scheme that required students to pay direct fees of US\$80 to US\$107 annually per student and total charges were raised to US\$667.

The funding of public universities in Kenya is currently based on unit cost. The current unit cost of US\$1,600 is comprised of tuition of US\$1,147 and catering, accommodation, and other costs that amount to US\$453. The method does not take into account differential costs of the various degree programs.

### **Research and Publishing**

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the volume of research carried out at the University of Nairobi, the oldest and biggest public university in the country, was one of the highest in Africa. One of the key factors that has stunted the growth of research in the Kenyan university system is lack of adequate research funds.

The large portion of support (although inadequate) for postgraduate and staff training and research work comes from donors and international organizations. Lack of adequate qualified researchers constitutes the second major constraint to research expansion.

### **Private Higher Education**

Of the 13 private universities, only 5 are accredited. The other 8 are mainly small religious institutions that award degrees through larger universities based in the West (mainly the United States). Table 1 above shows the undergraduate enrollment at the public and private universities from 1996-97 to 1999-2000 academic years.

The growth of the private university sector in Kenya has been fuelled by several factors, including: the limited opportunities available in public universities; the constant closures of state-funded universities; the need to complement government-managed higher institutions of learning; and the determination by some religious organizations to open higher learning institutions largely for their followers.

The leading 4 private universities generate substantial income from student fees. As profit-making institutions, fees are charged strictly in accordance with market forces on the basis of full cost recovery.

### **Gender Issues**

In spite of this massive expansion, gender and regional imbalances have shaped and continue to shape the development of higher education in Kenya as in other African countries. The proportion of girls' enrollment declines as they move up the educational ladder. As a result, female students make up about 30 percent of total enrollments in the public universities. Female students' under-representation is higher in engineering and technical-based professional programs.

Gender parity is evident in all the accredited private universities, with women comprising 54.5% of the 1999-2000 total student enrollment. Most women enroll in private universities because they fail to secure admission into the public universities, and also due to the fact that the course offerings in these institutions are in the social sciences, education, arts, business administration, accounting, and computer science.

**Note:** For detailed account on the state of higher education in Kenya, please consult: Charles Ngome, *African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook* (Damtew Teferra and Philip. G. Altbach, eds., Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 359-371.